

Title	CONDITION OF THE BRITISH WORKERS IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
Author(s)	Kikuchi, Kozo
Citation	Kyoto University Economic Review (1978), 48(1-2): 49-71
Issue Date	1978-10
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2433/125537">http://hdl.handle.net/2433/125537</a>
Right	
Type	Departmental Bulletin Paper
Textversion	publisher

# THE KYOTO UNIVERSITY ECONOMIC REVIEW

MEMOIRS OF THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS  
IN THE KYOTO UNIVERSITY

---

VOL. XLVIII, NO. 1-2 APRIL-OCTOBER 1978 Whole No. 104-105

---

## CONTENTS

**Japanese Capitalism and Foreign  
Trade 1945-1970 (II)**

*Kazuichiro ONO* 1

**The Position and the Character  
of the Large-Scale Farming  
in the United States (I)**

*Isshin NAKANO* 22

**Condition of the British Workers  
in the Latter Half of the  
Nineteenth Century**

*Kozo KIKUCHI* 49

---

PUBLISHED BY

THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, KYOTO UNIVERSITY

SAKYO-KU, KYOTO, JAPAN

# CONDITION OF THE BRITISH WORKERS IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By Kozo KIKUCHI\*

## I Location of the Problems

It may safely be said that there existed traditionally a widely accepted and established "historical image" of labor movements or labor-management relations in the latter half of the nineteenth century, especially over a quarter of the century from the 1850's to the 1880's. As is well known, it was an era of what S. & B. Webb called "the New Model." The definition of the times by S. & B. Webb is roughly summarized as follows. After the decline of the Owenism in 1843, there emerged among trade unions in England a moderate "New Spirit" (a) filled with a spirit of intellectual improvement and self-help, (b) denying a strike as a means to realize demands, and (c) intending to improve wages and labor conditions through "autonomous control" embracing the theory of demand and supply. With a view to realizing the spirit and the course of action, "the New Model", a typical example of which was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) was organized. Since then such a type of unions exerted influence and domination over the whole world of trade unionism.<sup>1)</sup>

On the other hand, Cole presented here and there some different insights in comprehending the history of the labor movements in England during this period. Nevertheless, in outlining the history an emphasis was placed on the fact that the nucleus of the working classes, who benefited equally from the prosperity of the British capitalism, was immersed in such bourgeois morals as saving, abstinence and self help.<sup>2)</sup> The above mentioned understanding has naturally become established in the study of British labor history in Japan, which is based initially on the works of Webbs and Cole. The description of Ken Kurita in his study of the history of British trade unionism<sup>3)</sup> and the analysis of Seiji Arai in his study of the English socioeconomic history<sup>4)</sup> are the representative examples. They emphasized the aspect more than Webb and Cole in some instances. Furthermore, looking over the research situations in Britain, Etsuko Yasukawa reviewed "the image of

---

\* Associate Professor.

1) S. & B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, 1894, Chap. 6.

2) G. D. H. Cole, *A short History of the British Working-Class Movement, 1789-1947*, 1948, Part II, Chap. 1-2.

3) Ken Kurita, *Igirisu Rōdōkumiai shiron (The Analysis of the History of the British Trade Unionism)*, 1963, Introduction and Chap. I.

4) Seiji Arai, *Kindai Igirisu Shakai-Keizaishi (Modern British Socio-economic History)*, 1968, Chap. 8.

the working class", which was to be the axis of the study of the history of labor movement, and discussed the "anchoring of the English working class within the establishment", spreading her view to the end of the nineteenth century. She explains as follows on the last part of the nineteenth century, when the studies of the Industrial Revolution by Toynbee and Mantoux based on the historical view of the Whig liberalism, and the Fabian study of the history of trade unionism by S. & B. Webb started: "The above image of the English working class allowed the improvement and the fixation of the position of workers in the capitalistic society in the background of the advanced character of the British capitalism and its favorable position in the world. In fact, the proletariat who was to act subjectively and revolutionally as was expected by young Engels sheathed his own sword and came to stay and be fixed in the establishment of the British capitalism. To be sure, the English working class became the mother in creating the concept of waged labor or of the proletariat (conceived by Marx and Engels). In reality, however, the Whig or Fabian image of workers has come to stay..."<sup>5)</sup>

Now, some of the points above explained provide us with some help to locate and examine our problems. In looking back the real trend of the English working class in the latter half of the nineteenth century, everyone can not but wonder at the big discrepancy lying between the reality and the image of the working class or the classical image of proletariat envisaged by young Marx and Engels in the 1840's. Seen in the light of the real British labor movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century, were Marx and Engels wrong in misreading in the English working class the image of the proletariat who was to become the main body of the future social revolution, responsible for the assignment in the world history to open a breakthrough of social revolution with international spin-off effects? As is well known, such a discrepancy between the vision of social revolution of Marx and Engels coupled with the "image of the subjective proletariat" and the reality of the English working class gave on the one hand an important start to the study of the history of thought in pursuit of the later development or evolution of the thought and theory of Marx and Engels themselves, intertwined with the reality of the development of capitalism.<sup>6)</sup> On the other hand, the recognition of the same discrepancy has formed a controversial theme in England in the recent studies of the labor history.

Concerning this point, let us cite the argument of E. P. Thompson vs. Currie and Hartwell. Thompson adopts as his basic viewpoint the dynamic concept of the early years of Marx that workers are to acquire a class consciousness and attain an introvert self-formation only in the turmoil of labor movements or class-struggles. He defines from this viewpoint the period from 1780 to 1830 that overlaps the Industrial Revolution as the formative years of the English working class. Above all, with his viewpoint regarding the

---

5) Etsuko Yasukawa, "Rōdō-Undō to Kaikyū-Ishiki" (Labor Movement and Class-Consciousness), *Shiso*, Oct. 1967.

6) As a result of such study, let us cite two works; Yasushi Yamanouchi, *Marx-Engels no Sekaishi-Zō* (Marx-Engels' Image of the World History), 1966, and Kenji Awaji, *Marx no Koshinkoku Kakumei-Zō* (Marx's Image of the Revolution of Underdeveloped Nations), 1971.

common experiences and the awareness of the identity of interests or "class consciousness" as a characteristic of "class formation", Thompson evaluates the entire process of common experiences of working people, which began with the Industrial Revolution and led to the Chartism as the "formation of the English working class". The following remark well expresses his assertion: "In the years between 1780 and 1832, most English working people came to feel an identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against their rulers and employers." "By 1832, there were strongly based self conscious working-class institutions—trade unions, friendly societies, educational or religious movements, political organizations, periodicals—and there came into existence working-class intellectual traditions, working-class community-patterns and working class structure of feeling." "From 1830 onwards a more clearly defined class-consciousness, in the customary Marxist sense, was maturing." (cf. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, rev. ed. Pelican Books, 1968, esp. pp. 10-12, 207-232, 781-782.)

As regard to the Thompson's theory, Currie and Hartwell level from a standpoint of strict empirical economic historian a caustic criticism at his ways of quoting historical materials and of description, as follows: "Mr Thompson also tends to use his imagination and some evidence to state what might have happened and then to proceed as though what might have happend had happend." "Certainly conflicts of interests between groups seeking what they conceive to be their own advantage has been a mainspring of historical change, but, group interests have always been numerous and have cut across one another in complicated ways. To make sense of the class thesis, a certain cohesiveness is necessary." "But Mr Thompson's working class 'united by common experience' remains, even after 850 pages (by the way, the total number of pages of Thompson's book is 915. . . . Kikuchi), a myth, a construct of determined imagination and theoretical presupposition." (cf. R. Currie and R. M. Hartwell, "The Making of the English Working Class?" *The Economic History Review*, 2nd series, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, 1965, esp. pp. 635-639.)

The above dispute between Thompson vs. Hartwell and others concerns just the first half of the nineteenth century. In the extended line of each argument, however, eyes are fixed on the image of English workers of the latter half of the nineteenth century. In a sense, these arguments compete in understanding the period of the Industrial Revolution, based on their respective visions about the entire body of the English labor history.

At any rate, should we deny as false either of the bipolar images of the English working class: the image of the workers who stand at the foremost place of the world proletariat as a main carrier of revolution and the image of those who came to stay in the system of the capitalism? Or should we re-evaluate the issue within a historical necessity as a problem of the transition of the English working class itself, though these bipolar images of the workers will naturally be revised? Moreover in that case, what view can assert the adequacy in explaining the causal sequence? These questions, through manifold problem consciousness, have been the subject on which the investigators of the English labor history are asked of their own viewpoints. For us who study these problems at the present time, it will be necessary to verify the subject from two aspects, having in mind a stream of critical reorganization of the English labor history which is being undertaken

by the investigators within our country and abroad.<sup>7)</sup> One of the tasks is to verify what the "trend of fixing within the establishment" of the English workers really was. The other task is to work so as to re-evaluate within possibly the widest and the most profound view the realistic mechanism which prescribed the trend of the British labor movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This paper is nothing but one of those attempts concerned especially to the latter task.

## II Disputes among the Contemporaries

What constitutes the starting point in approaching the above issue is, most of all, the elucidation of the situation by Engels himself. In the middle of the 1880's, Engels wrote an article, "England in 1845 and in 1885."<sup>8)</sup> In the article, Engels, who eyewitnessed the reality of the labor movement of the nineteenth century in England, elucidated the reason of unsuccessful realization of his once envisaged image of the proletariat in relation with the very nature of the British capitalism, and at the same time he tried to show a new prospect: ①Over the intermediate period of the nineteenth century Britain continued to secure "industrial monopoly" in the world market and the working classes were benefited from this profit to some extent. ②As a result, the conditions of the English workers underwent a certain improvement, and this explains the non-existence of the socialism in England or the containment of the working class within the establishment. ③Nevertheless, distribution of profit from the "industrial monopoly" was quite unequal, and the "previledged few" or "labor aristocracy" acquired the greatest portion of it. In the future, however, along with the decline of the industrial monopoly by England, the working class will come to lose their previledged position and will find itself "generally...on a level as low as its fellow-workers abroad" including the previledged upper stratum, and this only will bring about the revival of the socialism in England. The gist of Engels' argument is summarized as above. Providing in itself a coherent explanation on the nature of British capitalism, the condition of the working people, and the trend of the labor movements, it makes up an explanatory principle which may well be called "Engels Thesis." These points made by Engels have explicitly or implicitly functioned as key words which many of the investigators, including the disputants cited in the beginning of this paper, of the history of the English labor movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century are based on, in analyzing the nature of labor movements or labor-management relations. In that case, the direction of a stream of study which runs from Engels to Cole,

7) As to this point, refer to the author's work, "Rōshi Kankeishi Kenkyū no Hohō" (On the Study Method of the History of Labor-Management Relations), in *Shakai Seisaku to Rōdō Keizai (Social Policies and Labor Economy)*, ed. by the Academic Society for Social Policies, 1971.

8) This paper was first published in the *Commonwealth* in March 1885, and in the same year it was carried in German in the *Neue Zeit*. Later it was carried as an appendix in the American edition of: Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England—1844, 1887*, and also carried as a part of the introduction of the German edition. Marx-Engels Werke, Band 2, Ohtsuki ed. (*The Whole Collection of Marx and Engels*), 2, pp. 674-677.

and through the various studies in Japan, is to observe a relation between the "industrial monopoly" and the condition of working class expressly in association with the upper stratum of the working class or "labor aristocracy".<sup>9)</sup> Seen in the light of the history of trade unionism, the direction was to narrow a viewpoint to an analysis of "craft unions" which organized the upper stratum of the skilled workers.

As is explained in a separate paper, however, craft unions covered a limited part of workers in the existing English working class of the nineteenth century<sup>10)</sup>. The relation between the development of capitalism and the conditions of workers in this period needs to be examined again with a wider view involving general laborers. In addition, craft unions' behavior patterns and the objective functions in larger society should be reevaluated again in this background. Moreover, Engels' thesis itself has to be evaluated again in the light of the contemporary historical background in which it was born.

Now let us turn our eyes to some historical facts. As is known, accomplishing the industrial revolution as a pioneer, the British capitalism established "a large mechanized industry" mainly of textile, above all of cotton, and at the same time it put the accumulation of industrial capital in orbit both in consumers' goods production and producer's goods production. With its overwhelmingly predominant position in industrial production capacity, it made the country to be "the factory of the world" and established a system of international division of work with underdeveloped countries as the market of its industrial products or the supplier of materials. Taking advantage of the monopolistic position in the world market in this stage, it expanded by leaps and bounds. There have already been accumulated studies and findings concerning the actual situations and the nature of the development of the British capitalism in the nineteenth century and so we will not discuss the matter in detail here. Instead, we will simply observe the trend of the development of the British capitalism in separate tables which show the increase in the mining and manufacturing industries' production as indices, the amount of export by each item and the change, and the occupational transition of the working population. It will be easy to read from these tables the flourishing expansion of the British economy in the intermediate period of the Victorian Era or the third quarter of the nineteenth century and the stagnation of the so-called "the Great Depression" after 1873 (1873-1896).

Then what was the living condition of the workers in the process of development of the British capitalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century? This was the very issue which created not only various confronting opinions like the contemporary views of Giffen and Engels but also excited disputes among workers or managements in the 1880's, when the serious effect of "the Great Depression" became apparent to everybody and broke a

- 
- 9) Lenin's theory of "labor aristocracy" is what was developed in an extreme form with the Engels Thesis as a general theory applicable to the imperialistic capitalism and the tendency is especially strong and apparent among the Japanese investigators of labor problems who have traditionally been under the influence of Lenin's theory.
  - 10) Refer to the author's paper, "Two Industrial Disputes in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century," Okayama University, *Keizai Gakkai Zasshi*, Vol. 5, Nos. 3-4, pp. 262-284. Hobsbaum also estimates the quantitative ratio of the members of the trade unions or labor aristocracy to account for 10 to 20% of the working class in this period: E. J. Hobsbaum, *Labouring Men*, 1964, p. 279.

Table 1. Increase of Production (1826~1913)

(1913=100)

	Mining and Manufacturing		Producers Goods	Consumers Goods	Cotton Yarn	Cotton Cloth	Coal	Pig iron and Steel	Iron and Steel Manufactures (Including Machinery)
	Excluding Building	Including Building							
1826-37	16.2 (150)	18.5 (148)	8.9 (150.8)	24.9 (150)	16.8 (218.2)	13.0 (194.0)	11.6 (163.4)	6.7 (239.3)	6.6 (194.1)
38-47	21.7 (134.0)	25.2 (136.2)	15.2 (170.8)	32.3 (129.7)	28.2 (167.9)	23.5 (180.8)	17.6 (151.7)	11.2 (167.2)	10.4 (157.6)
48-57	31.9 (147.5)	35.2 (139.7)	22.9 (150.7)	42.5 (131.6)	40.9 (146.0)	35.5 (151.1)	23.2 (131.8)	20.4 (182.1)	18.3 (176.0)
58-66	38.4 (120.4)	46.1 (131.0)	31.9 (139.2)	46.6 (109.6)	49.8 (121.8)	44.4 (125.1)	35.3 (152.0)	26.9 (31.9)	24.6 (134.4)
67-73	49.1 (127.9)	56.2 (121.9)	40.8 (17.9)	59.1 (126.8)	57.2 (114.9)	51.7 (116.5)	44.2 (122.4)	39.9 (148.3)	33.9 (137.8)
74-83	59.8 (111.8)	66.7 (118.7)	56.2 (137.7)	65.1 (110.2)	70.1 (122.6)	63.7 (123.2)	57.0 (128.9)	59.7 (149.6)	49.5 (146.0)
84-90	65.9 (110.2)	74.2 (110.7)	62.2 (110.7)	71.9 (110.4)	76.4 (109.0)	71.1 (111.6)	63.2 (110.9)	66.4 (111.2)	60.1 (121.4)
1891-1900	77.3 (117.5)	91.7 (123.6)	73.5 (118.1)	84.0 (116.8)	80.9 (105.6)	78.3 (110.1)	78.3 (123.9)	79.2 (120.0)	73.2 (121.8)
1901-07	86.8 (112.3)	99.2 (108.2)	84.6 (115.1)	89.9 (107.0)	91.1 (112.6)	88.4 (112.8)	93.2 (119.0)	92.9 (116.6)	86.8 (118.6)
08-13	100.0 (115.2)	100.0 (101.6)	100.0 (118.2)	100.0 (111.2)	100.0 (109.8)	100.0 (113.1)	100.0 (107.2)	100.0 (107.6)	100.0 (115.2)

N. B. 1) The index are the highest values of the respective periods

2) The figures in the parentheses are respectively based on the index of the previous period which are assumed to be 100. For those of 1826-1837, the index of 1825 are assumed to be 100.

Hoffmann, W. G., *British Industry 1700-1950*, 1955, Table 54.

Table 2. Values at Current Prices of Principal Domestic Exports

(in £1,000,000)

	Coal	Iron and Steel	Hard-ware and Cutlery	Mach-inery	Non-ferrous Metals and Manufactures	Cotton Goods	Wool Goods	Linen Goods	Silk Goods	Apparel etc.	Leather Manufactures	Chemicals
1820	0.1	0.9	0.8		1.4	16.5	5.6	1.7	0.4		0.4	
1830	0.2	1.1	1.4	0.2	1.3	19.4	4.9	2.1	0.5	1.0	0.3	
1840	0.6	2.9	1.6	0.6	1.8	25.7	5.8	4.1	0.8	1.4	0.4	0.4
1850	1.3	6.2	2.9	1.0	2.5	28.3	10.0	4.8	1.3	2.5	0.4	1.0
1860	3.4	13.6	4.3	3.8	4.0	52.0	15.7	6.6	2.4	6.5	1.7	2.2
1870	5.6	23.5	4.1	5.3	4.8	71.4	26.7	9.5	2.6	7.5	1.8	5.1
1880	8.4	27.2	3.9	9.3	4.8	75.6	20.6	6.8	2.7	8.1	2.1	8.8
1890	19.0	31.1	4.1	16.4	7.2	74.4	24.5	6.6	2.7	8.4	2.9	12.0
1900	38.6	31.6	3.6	19.6	6.0	69.8	20.2	6.2	2.1	8.0	2.4	13.1

Great Britain 1820 (excluding exports to Ireland), and United Kingdom 1830-1900

B.R. Mitchel, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, 1962, pp. 302-305.



dream of social stabilization. In his inaugural address, Robert Giffen, who was to take the post of the president of the Royal Statistical Society, discussed the theme of "the Progress of the Working Class in the Last Half Century." He maintained, "That it happens, for the moment to be attracting a considerable amount of popular attention in connection with sensational politics and sociology, with agitations for land nationalisation and collectivism among pretended representatives of the working classes, is an additional reason for our not neglecting this question."<sup>11)</sup>

As we know from the above remark addressed in the beginning of the speech and from his caustic criticism against the "false impression that the capitalist classes getting richer and richer, while the mass remain poor or become poorer," Giffen was clearly conscious of Marx-Engels' evaluation of the development of the capitalism and the condition of workers. Very conscious of the "revival of the socialism" in England, he rivalled and intended a positive evaluation of the "improvement" of the condition of working people. Therefore, based on fragmentary materials, Giffen explained that "there is an enormous apparent rise in money wages ranging from 20 and in most cases from 50 to 100 per cent" in the last half century, that the commodity price stayed relatively stable during that period, that various new goods became available, that the price of grain dropped substantially due to the price fall in the 1870's and that the increase of price of meat and

Table 3. Labor Force

(in thousands)

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Commercial Occupations	94 1	91 —	130 2	212 5	352 11	449 26	597 76	739 157	904 587
Transport and Communications	196 4	433 13	579 11	654 16	870 15	1,104 20	1,409 27	1,571 38	1,530 72
Agriculture and Forestry etc.	1,434 81	1,788 229	1,779 163	1,634 135	1,517 116	1,422 80	1,339 86	1,436 117	1,344 105
Mining and Quarrying	218 7	383 11	457 6	517 11	604 8	751 7	931 6	1,202 8	1,240 9
Metals, Machines, etc.	396 14	536 36	747 45	869 46	977 49	1,151 59	1,485 84	1,795 128	2,125 175
Building and Construction	376 1	496 1	593 1	712 4	875 2	899 3	1,216 3	1,140 5	894 5
Paper, Printing, etc.	44 6	62 16	79 23	94 31	134 53	178 78	212 111	253 144	193 121
Textiles	525 358	661 635	612 676	584 726	554 745	593 795	557 795	639 870	409 701
Clothing	358 200	418 491	413 596	390 594	379 667	409 759	423 792	432 825	315 602
Food, Drink, and Tobacco	268 42	348 53	386 71	448 78	494 98	597 163	701 216	806 308	228 123

in each column, Males—above, Females—below.

B. R. Mitchell/P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, p. 60.

11) Inaugural Address of R. Giffen, "The Progress of the Working Class in the Last Half Century", *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* (abbreviated as *J. R. Stat. Soc.* hereafter), Vol. XLVI, Dec. 1883, pp. 595-6.

housing was not big enough to offset the profit enjoyed by the workers. With these reasons, he maintained that the increase of money wages might be regarded as real wage increase. Also with some figures pointing to the improvement of education and of public hygiene, the decrease of mortality, the increase of food import per capita, the decline of the incidence of crime, the decline of the percentage of the relieved people, the increase of the number of subscribers of saving banks and the expansion of co-operative societies, Giffen concluded that "the masses of the people are better, immensely better, than they were fifty years ago".<sup>12)</sup> Since that time, Giffen persistently continued to make such a statement public.<sup>13)</sup>

V. Neale and others criticized Giffen's understanding above explained from the time of its publication on the latter's method of presumption which made use of the wage data in spite of their limitation.<sup>14)</sup> Nonetheless, partly because of Giffen's social authority, his view became a main stream leading the public opinion and Leone Levi and others came to support this view.<sup>15)</sup>

It was none else but Engels who opposed Giffen's view. It was forty years after the publication of *The Condition of the Working Class in England* when Engels wrote the article, "England in 1845 and 1885". He dealt with the changes in the period which was roughly the same as that covered by Giffen, and in this article he criticized Giffen and Leone Levi by name.<sup>16)</sup> From these facts his intention in writing the article is clear.

Another thing that attracts the attention of us who pursue the contemporary interpretation is the "Industrial Remuneration Conference" held at the beginning of 1885 when Engels published the thesis. With Sir Charles Dilke as chairman, this grand conference was held from January 28 to 30, 1885 and gathered influential representatives from labor, academic, political and management circles. Twenty-seven reporters spoke on separate themes and excited discussion followed thereafter. The discussion involved such a wide range of issues as the difference in the results of industrial development within the classes, the reality of income distribution, the understanding of the condition of workers, and the effectiveness of the national control of capital and land as a means to solve social problems.<sup>17)</sup> To be sure, when compared with the situation after 1889, which was marked by the emergence of new unions and by the publication of the first volume of the Social Survey by Charles Booth, "the Industrial Remuneration Conference" was, according to a historian J. Saville, "one of the last major occasions when public debate about social questions takes place on Victorian

12) *Ibid.*, pp. 606-612.

13) R. Giffen, "Further Notes on the Progress of the Working Classes in the Last Half Century", *J. R. Stat. Soc.*, Vol. XLIX, March 1886.

14) E. Vansitart Neale, "Condition of the Working Classes", *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science*, 1884, pp. 607-641. Cf. J. Saville's introduction to *Industrial Remuneration Conference*—see note 17)—p. 32.

15) Leone Levi, "Condition of the Working Classes", *ibid.*, pp. 588-606.

16) The paragraphs cited in the "Preface to the English Edition of 1892" in Engels *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, translated and edited by W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner, 1971, Appendix III, pp. 367-368.

17) *Industrial Remuneration Conference (1885) the Report of Proceedings and Papers*, with an introduction by J. Saville, Kelley, 1968.

assumptions.”<sup>18)</sup> To be Sure, at this conference representatives from trade unions mentioned very little about semi-skilled or unskilled workers. Nonetheless, together with the representatives from the existing trade unions, the co-operative societies and the Trades Councils, J. MacDonald and J. Williams from the newly organized Social Democratic Federation (S. D. F.) and John Burns, a mechanic and leader of the new unionism, took part in the conference. Also invited were Bernard Shaw and other two representatives from the Fabian Society. Thus, the Industrial Remuneration Conference reflected to some extent the atmosphere of the time which had already begun to move.

Now, we can see how Engels' article was published in such historical backgrounds. Engels' article was published on March 1, a month later of “the Industrial Remuneration Conference,” at the end of January 1885 as already mentioned. It was published in English language in the Commonwealth, one of the main journal of the revived socialist movement, edited by William Morris. In fact, Engels wrote the thesis at this point setting his eyes on the stormy discussions at the Conference, partly because he was obliged to express his own viewpoint as the author of “*The Condition of the Working Class in England—1845*” and also the commander-in-chief of the European socialist movement who plays the first violin after the death of Marx, and partly because he had intended for years to criticize the contentions made by Giffen and Leone Levi.

Thus, along with the worsening of “the Great Depression” and with the spread of unemployment, there emerged a new movement in the British labor movement and there appeared a sign of violent shaking in labor-management relations. Along with that process, arguments on the history of the condition of working people and on the understanding of their real situations became heated.

### III Condition of the Workers—general views—

With a base on the above mentioned process, naturally arose an attempt to obtain a perspective on the issue as objectively as possible through available data and an attempt to inquire anew into facts themselves. Arrangement of labor statistics undertaken over the turn of the century by A. L. Bowley, G. H. Wood and others, as well as the concurrent survey on conditions of life and labor by C. Booth, B. S. Rowntree and others show the very nature of the above.

We will first attempt a bird's eye view of the condition of workers in close touch with the work by Wood, who intended to confirm statistically the transition of the labor condition in the latter half of the century.<sup>19)</sup> The findings by Wood are arranged together in Fig. 1. Let us add some examinations on this problem referring to this figure.

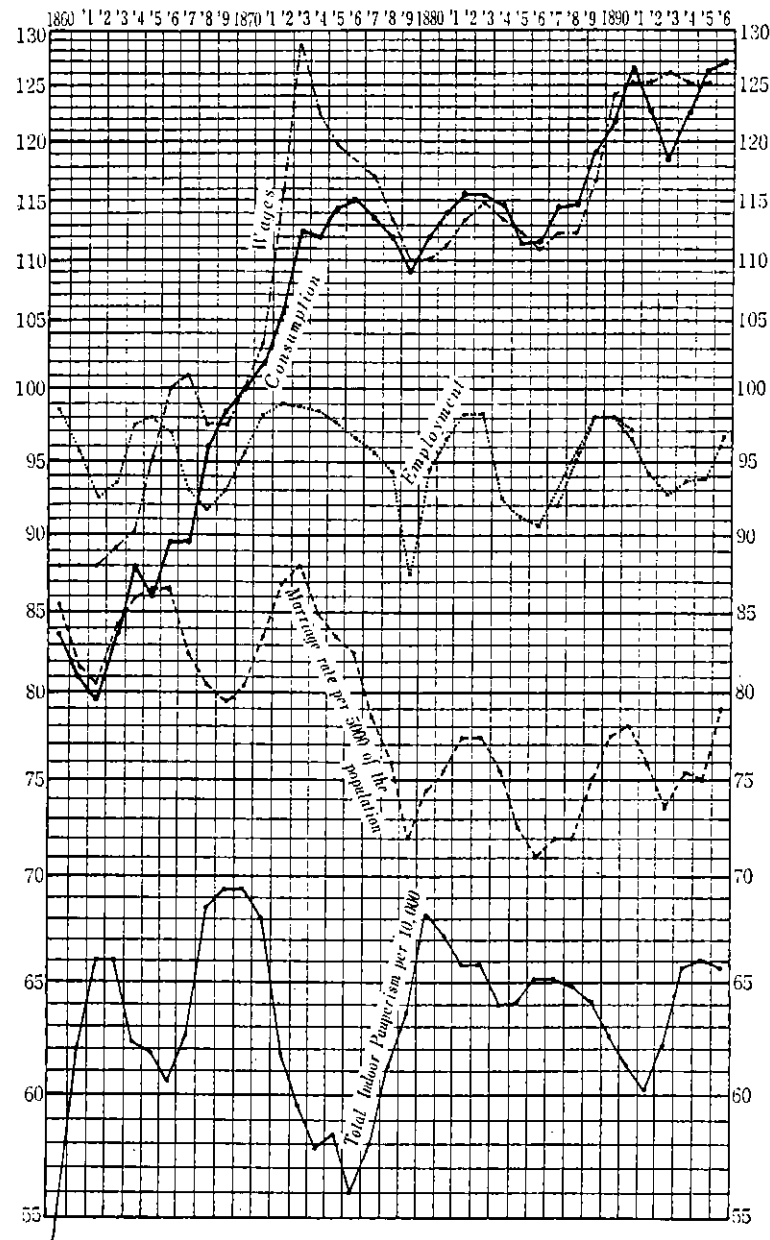
**Wages.** In observing the fluctuation of money wages, Wood utilized the fluctuation indices of the average money wage which had already been introduced by Bowley in *Journal of Royal Statistical Society*. In this case, Bowley's average wage indices were

---

18) J. Saville, *ibid.*, p. 42.

19) G. H. Wood, “Some Statistics relating to Working Class Progress since 1860”, *J. R. Stat. Soc.*, Vol. LXII, Dec. 1899, pp. 638-666.

Fig. 1. Trends of Money Wages, Employment and Consumption



G. H. Wood,  
*Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. LXII, Dec. 1899,  
 p. 660 facing.

calculated by revising and averaging the fluctuation indices of the money wage rates of the seventeen groups, i.e., agricultural laborers, typesetters (London, Edinburgh, Bristol), bricklayers (London), unskilled construction laborers, carpenters (Edinburgh), masons (Glasgow), sailors, mechanics (wage rates of the members of ASE), iron foundry workers, steam engine construction workers, puddling workers, colliers (Lanarkshire & Northumberland), mine engine men (Lanarkshire), and glass-blowers (Yorkshire). Since the figure is scaled in logarithm in order to emphasize the fluctuations rates, those with a substantial fluctuation

over a long period like money wages (and commodity consumption later explained) are still more emphasized. Even if we take this point into consideration, the remarkable wage increase from the beginning of the 1860's to 1873, when the so-called Great Depression started, is noteworthy. With the arrival of the Great Depression money wages fell strikingly. Although it began to grow again at the end of the 1880's, it failed to recover the level of 1873 as late as the middle of the 1890's.

**Unemployment.** To the best of my knowledge, the most detailed and precise figures to be used in verifying the general unemployment rate in England in the latter half of the nineteenth century based on the primary materials are those estimated by Wood. As is well known, official statistics of unemployment in England had not existed until 1886. It was not until 1886 that the Labour Department of the Board of Trade had begun to prepare unemployment statistics monthly based on reports from respective trade unions. As to the previous period, we have no choice but depend on the figures left in the records of respective trade unions. At any rate, usually available unemployment rates till the end of the century are strictly understood only as "unemployment rates of trade union members". However, Wood did no less than pay his own efforts in order to make it possible to relate figures before 1886 with the official figures after 1886. Taking the difference in the numbers of trade union members into consideration, he pointed out that the simple means of the reported figures of each unions, would result in underestimation of general unemployment rates. Therefore, Wood estimated the total number of union members for each union at the end of each year after 1860 by the *Fourth and Fifth Report on Trade Unions 1891*. Based on these figures he took a weighted mean of unemployment rates of

Table 4. Unemployment Rate of Ironfounders Union

	Unemployment rate (%)		Unemployment rate (%)		Unemployment rate (%)
1837	12.4	1861	8.6	1877	9.1
1838	10.5	1862	13.8	1878	14.6
1839	11.1	1863	9.3	1879	22.3
1840	14.8	1864	4.5	1880	10.9
1841	18.5	1865	3.6	1881	7.8
1842	11.0	1866	6.4	1882	4.3
1843	7.4	1867	15.9	1883	4.3
1844	5.1	1868	18.0	1884	7.2
1845	3.9	1869	15.5	1885	10.9
1846	19.3	1870	6.9	1886	13.9
1847	15.7	1871	2.4	1887	10.0
1848	33.4	1872	1.4	1888	5.6
1849	22.3	1873	3.2	1889	1.8
1850	13.8	1874	3.9	1890	2.4
⋮	...	1875	3.5	1891	4.6
1860	2.8	1876	5.7		

*Statistical Tables and Reports on Trade Unions Fourth Report 1891, p. 523.*

each union and thereby he estimated "general unemployment rates".<sup>20)</sup> Values obtained in this way were much higher than the simple means. These values are shown in Fig. 1 together with the figures after 1886 obtained by the Labour Department Statistics as the employment index. As is seen by observing the period between 1887 and 1891 where the two lines overlap, these revised unemployment rates by Wood are either approximately the same with the values of the government statistics or a little less than them. Based on this observation, Wood contended the adequacy of his own estimation of the unemployment rates of the previous period.

Now let us compare the unemployment rates thus obtained with those in the first half of the century. There exist no data of immediately comparable general unemployment rates of the first half of the century. However, when compared with the unemployment record of each trade union, the level of employment in the latter half of the century became certainly improved substantially. As an example, Table 4 shows the figures of the iron foundry workers which were used also by Wood as the source material and it shows consecutive records on unemployment back to the first half of the century. This tendency is common to other trade unions. In comparison with the high unemployment of the first half of the century, above all of "the hungry 1840's", improvement in employment in the latter half of the century is quite salient. But, as is obvious in Wood's graph, employment situation did not always follow a consecutive path of improvement over the period up to 1873, during which period the English economy prospered. On the contrary, a circulatory nature of increase and decrease of unemployment was clearly observed even though with the differences in amplitude.

**Commodity consumption.** At the time of writing his thesis, Wood thought it impossible to estimate consumer price index because of still insufficient data. Therefore, he gave up estimating real wages or the real purchasing power of the aforementioned money wages, and instead he observed fluctuations in the volume of consumption of daily living commodities. As to cocoa, coffee, raisen, rice, sugar, corn, spice, malt and beer, figures were taken directly from *The Statistical Abstract*; figures about grains (wheat and flour) were from *The Corn Trade Year Book*; figures about meat and wool from *The Year Book of Commerce*. The annual changes of the volume of consumption per capita were shown over the period from 1860 to 1896<sup>21)</sup> and efforts were made in order to render them into the united index. For generalizing the fluctuations of each consumers' goods which shows a substantially different trend even during an identical period, it is necessary to adopt a weighted system which takes relative importance of each consumers' goods into consideration. Wood, however, undertook five varieties of attempts<sup>22)</sup> and then demonstrated that after all there would be no big differences among the weighted averages taken by various weighted systems so long as higher weight were given to meat, grain and clothing. He so

20) *Ibid.*, pp. 640-648.

21) *Ibid.*, pp. 649-654.

22) One of the five varieties of Wood's attempts involved a weighted system which uses a composite ratio of household spending of those workers who belong to "the class E" in Booth's social Survey or "regular standard income holders", standing above "the poverty line". Cf. *ibid.*, p. 657.

made it plain that an unweighted average could approximately substitute a weighted average in understanding trends by index, and then introduced the commodity consumption curve.<sup>23)</sup> According to this curve, an expansion approximately by 30% of the commodity consumption was observed from the beginning of 1860's to the middle of the 1870's. During the subsequent period of the depression, commodity consumption fluctuated around this level. It was not until 1889 that it began again a striking growth.

Now we shall summarize the findings from the examination of these various major indices. ①In money wages, improvement of about 40% was observed through a rapid increase from the beginning of 1860's to 1873, but the fall during the period of the Great Depression was also striking. It was not until 1890 that they began to approach the level before the Great Depression. ②The trend of the real wages could not be estimated accurately, but material living standard of the workers improved by approximately 30% before the Great Depression as is observed in the increase of commodity consumption index related to the daily living materials of the common people. During the subsequent fifteen years, they stayed around this level. ③The employment level is more unstable than the index related to wages. The circulatory fluctuations, especially the peak of the unemployment in the Great Depression, are characteristic. ④In the 1890's the new trend of various indices which is different from the previous period appeared; i.e., the co-existence of the increase of unemployment and of the stable money wages, while commodity consumption or substantial standard of living declined, and so the improvement of the condition of the workers is still open to the conjecture. The findings will be summed up in the above four items. Using deliberate terminology as a statistician, Wood himself made the following remarks: "It is to be earnestly hoped that the progress during the present decade (after 1889) will not be succeeded by stagnation, as was the progress of 1860-75, but I fear that this is quite possible, if not probable."<sup>24)</sup>

In the above, the author has observed the general condition of the British workers in the latter half of the nineteenth century in close relation with the findings by Wood. This work of Wood may be said to have been the best at this point of those attempts which made use of a statistical approach. Wood concluded that there was a certain improvement of the condition of the workers, but his cool analysis without an exaggeration makes a persuasive criticism in itself to the contention led by Giffen.

#### IV Condition of the Workers—Examination of the Differences among the Strata

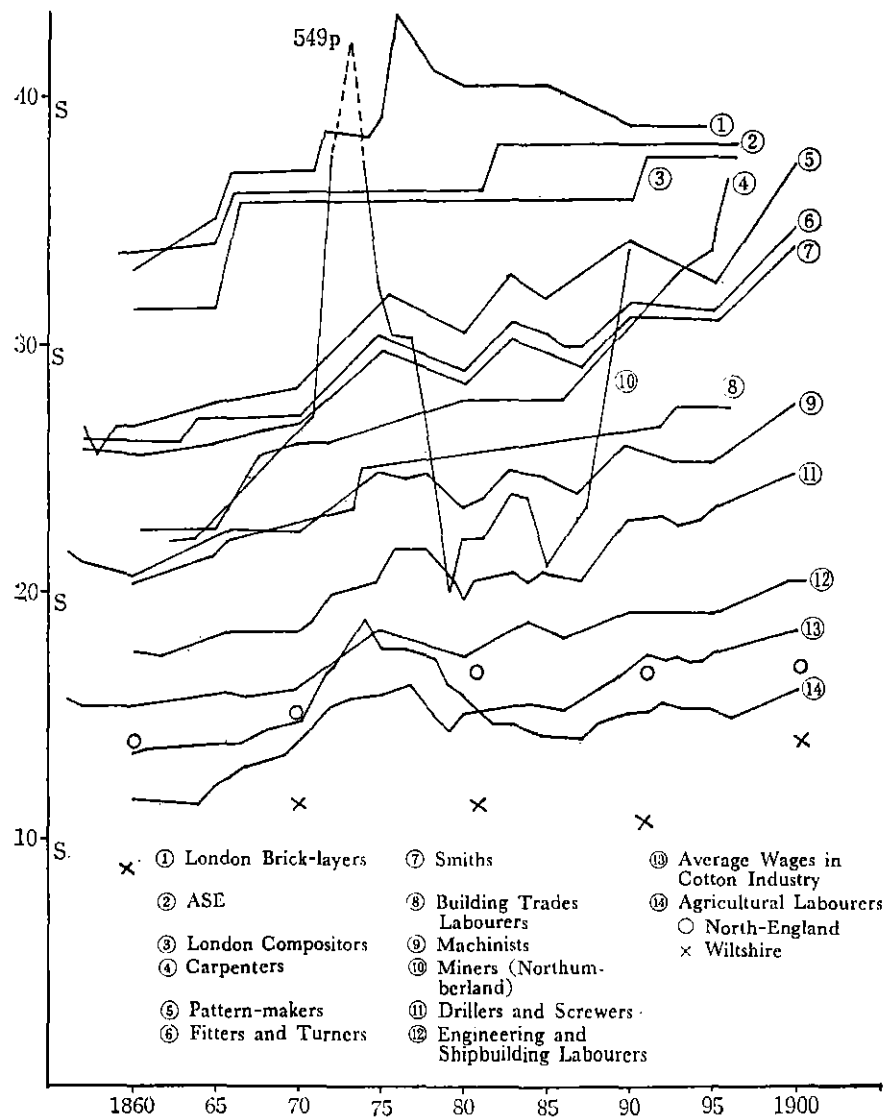
The work by Wood nonetheless has some problems. They were the problems concern-

23) Needless to say, the best way to understand the condition of workers is to estimate a precise trend of the real wages. Practically, however, real wages calculated after the second or the third manipulations allow only low reliability. In this sense, Wood's attempt to observe a trend of "commodity consumption" was proper. As to this point, Hobsbaum relies more on Wood's commodity consumption index saying, "real wage figures are too artificial and unreliable". E. J. Hobsbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-135.

24) Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 662.

ing the statistical approach itself. In other words, in an effort to generalize the condition of the workers in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Wood necessarily eliminated the differences among the strata within the working class. As Engels especially put an emphasis on the gap between the upper stratum of the working class or "labor aristocracy" and the lower stratum or the general laborers, in understanding the condition of workers, we will not be satisfied with "the general understanding" which ignores the point. Hence, we have to follow the fluctuations of the condition of the workers including the differences among the strata as much as possible with our own eyes. With this subject at hand, we

Fig. 2-a. Occupational Money Wages



①②③④⑧⑩⑭ : by Bowley, *J. R. Stat. Soc.*, Vol. LXII, p. 664~665,

⑤⑥⑦⑨⑪⑫ : by Bowley and Wood, *J. R. Stat. Soc.*, Vol. LXIX, p. 174~177,

⑬ : by Wood, *J. R. Stat. Soc.*, Vol. LXXIII, p. 585 facing.

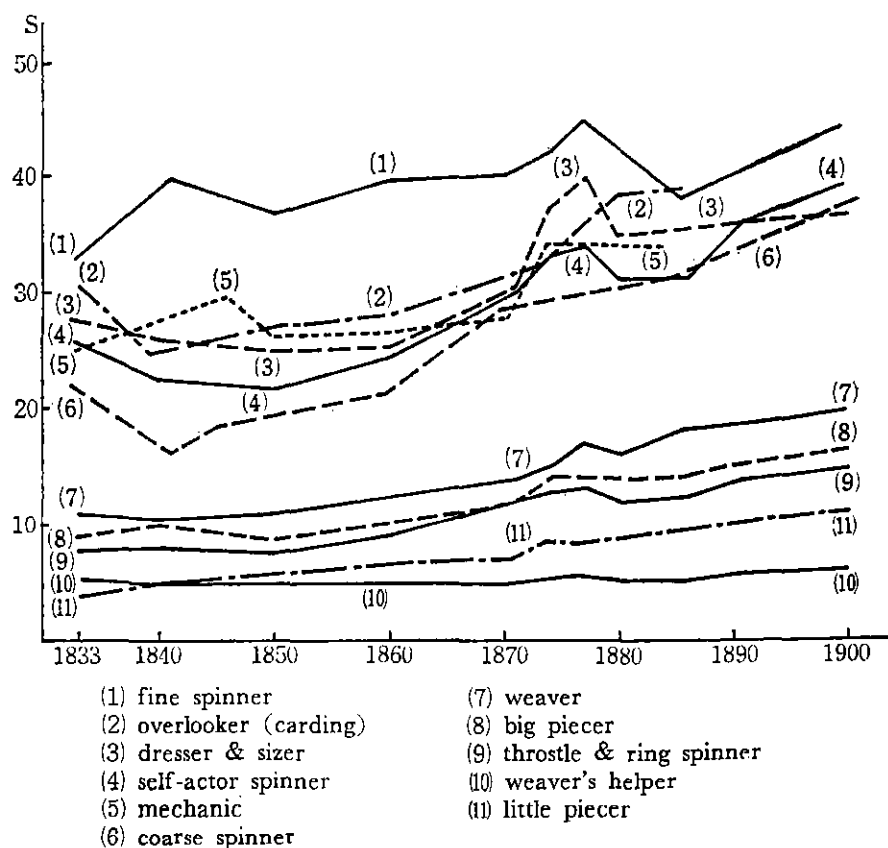
○, × : by A. Wilson Fox, *J. R. Stat. Soc.*, Vol. LXVI, p. 328, 332.



can not but be surprised to see how little the past Japanese studies in this field are. But we will first begin this work concerning the two major indices of wages and of employment.

**Wages.** Based on the numerical values calculated by Bowley and by Wood, we will first observe the trend of money wages of the major occupational categories. In Fig. 2-a we note the differences in wages under each occupational category as well as the fluctuations, which disappear when the average are taken. Then, taking a further step, we will see how the wage structure is within a type of industry. In Fig. 2-a, wages in the cotton industry are given in the form of average wage. The cotton industry is composed of various occupational categories which have many strata involving adult male, female and juvenile labors. Though the average wage becomes meaningful only in estimating cost in an enterprise, it can be said without an exaggeration that the average wage tells us nothing about the living condition of the group of laborers of each stratum. Taking the above point into consideration Fig. 2-b shows the wage level under each occupational category

Fig 2-b. Occupational Wages in Cotton Industry



Source : • (1)(3)(4)(6)(7)(8)(10)(11) ; G. H. Wood, *The History of Wages in the Cotton Trade during the Hundred Years*, pp. 28, 131.

• others ; A. L. Bowley, *Wages in the United Kingdom*, table facing p. 119.

Totsuka Hideo [Igirisu Kōjōhō Seiritsushi-ron] (Formation of Factory Legislation in Great Britain) p. 162.

and the trend, which were drawn from the laborious work by Hideo Totsuka. According to them, we will observe ①the trend of approximately parallel wage increase covering the upper stratum of the skilled groups, lower stratum of the skilled groups and the unskilled general laborers in the period before the Great Depression, and ②the trend of growing differences among various groups after the Great Depression.

In this case, labor of women, boys and girls in the cotton industry meant "more members of a family engaged in labor" (division of value of labor power in the customary Marxist sense) and belonged to a special category of waged labor. In case where there were no adult males who supported families due to death or divorce, the labor of these constituted their household income, but as a whole they were the holders of the secondary or complementary income. Needless to say, an independent analysis on the female or juvenile labor of low income groups remains to be an important subject.<sup>25)</sup> However, here we will simply point out that a considerably definite improvement was seen as to these groups at least concerning the money wage in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and will place the focus of examination on the two strata, i.e., the skilled workmen and the unskilled general laborers, both for adult male labor. This is because the subjects discussed in comparing the groups organized by unions and the groups not organized, or the upper stratum workers and the lower stratum workers, are the skilled workmen of each occupational category who are called artisans or craftsmen, and the general laborers. As to the skilled workmen of various occupational categories, we can confirm from the previous figure ①that there was a sustaining and considerably rapid increase of wages in the latter half of the century, and ② that in spite of the circulatory increase of unemployment, above all in spite of the worsening of unemployment after the Great Depression, there was not any big drop in wages, which after stagnant fluctuations, was succeeded by the increase after the end of the 1880's. Here, in comparison with the above points, we will observe the condition of the general laborers. In Fig. 2-a we have drawn the changes in the wages of the urban unskilled laborers and of agricultural laborers together, based on the data from the materials we used. In fact, in the process of development of the capitalism, potentially surplus population in rural areas or overcrowded agricultural laborers always functioned as a source to supply additional labor to the industrial labor. Since the classical study by Redford on the first half of the century, it has been pointed out that the axis of the population movement within England was the centripetal short-distant migration of labor in the form of ripples from the neighboring rural districts which was motivated by the demand for labor from urban manufacturing industries.<sup>26)</sup> This relation naturally tended to continue in the latter half of the century.<sup>27)</sup> In this case, if we desc-

25) Many researchs on poverty problems pointed out that especially the existence of fatherless families and orphans should be paid much attention in understanding poverty problems and the condition of the laborers who were at the bottom.

26) A. Redford, *Labour Migration in England 1800-1850*, p. 193.

27) Wilson Fox provides detailed evidences as to this point: A. Wilson Fox, "Agricultural Wages in England and Wales during the Last Fifty Years," *J. R. Stat. Soc.*, Vol. LXVI, June 1903, esp. pp. 310-322, and recently, E. H. Hunt, "Labour Productivity in English Agriculture 1850-1914", *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, Vol. XX, No. 2, August 1967, p. 284.

ribe the matter in relation to the condition of the laborers, unstable employment in agricultural labor and poverty from low wages are the tangible incentive for the outflow of labor. On the relation between the agricultural labor market and the urban labor market of manufacturing industries, Saunders, a representative from the England Restoration League, testified in his report as follows in the aforementioned Industrial Remuneration Conference: "That wages of 10s. per week mean starvation is obvious from the fact that a family of five persons cannot be kept in food alone in our workhouses for less than 15s. per week. This crushing influence starves our working-men, drives them forth from their native villages, and compels them, too, unwillingly to seek work elsewhere". (cf. W. Saunders, "Loss or Gain of Labourers in Rural District", *Industrial Remuneration Conference, Report 1885*, p. 113.)

Therefore, it must be assumed that the agricultural laborers among the general unskilled laborers always constituted the bottom of the working class. In this sense, it is important to observe the trend of the wages of the agricultural laborers, if we try to understand the structure of the real labor market and the condition of the entire working class.

Further more, we can naturally presume, if seen from this viewpoint, that there is a considerable difference in the demand supply relations of the agricultural laborers with an inevitable effect on the wage level between the districts which are sensitively subject to the absorption of labor from the nearby industrial districts and the purely agricultural districts which are remote from cities and manufacturing industries. In relation with this point it is interesting to note that Hunt, who attempted a detailed analysis in England on the problems of agricultural labor in his thesis, distinguished among agricultural districts "the high wage areas" near coal mines and industrial districts from the pure agricultural "low wage areas".<sup>28)</sup> Conscious of this point, we investigated and plotted in Fig. 2-a the wages of the agricultural laborers in the eight farms in Northern England representing the former group and the wages of the agricultural laborers in Wiltshire representing the latter.<sup>29)</sup> As is clearly seen in the figure, a certain difference exists within the same group of "general laborers" and the wages of the laborers in the industries of construction, shipbuilding and engineering kept a relatively high level. This is partly because the demand for unskilled laborers developed from cities and industrial districts, which were the center of the absorption of labor. However, this is also because these industries were under the control of craftsmen or skilled workers. In other words, in these industries, a qualification for a skilled worker is to go through the socially established "apprenticeship". Therefore, a group of workers who were to be given the title of "semi-skilled" were included as laborers in spite that they had a certain level of skill. Above all in the construction industry, the level of the laborers wage reflected the above explained circumstances.

28) According to Hunt, the examples of "the high wage areas" are Lancashire, and Northumberland and those of "the low wage areas" are Norfolk, Essex and Wiltshire. E. H. Hunt, *ibid.*, pp. 280-281.

29) The wages of agricultural laborers in the northern prefectures and Wiltshire were calculated from the tables in: Wilson Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 328 and p. 332.

On the other hand, the wages of agricultural laborers stay considerably low showing a definite difference between the urban or industrial areas and the purely industrial areas.

These observations tell us two aspects of facts. The first is that the monetary wage of the working class including the agricultural laborers who stand at the bottom tended to improve considerably in the latter half of the century, especially the third quarter leading to the Great Depression. During the subsequent Great Depression, the wage of the laborers certainly showed a substantial drop when compared with the wage of the skilled group and enlarged the difference between the two groups. However, the price of grain which comprised the main part of the living expenses of the laborers dropped in rate more than the wage.<sup>30)</sup> As is also seen from the trend of the commodity consumption prepared by Wood, it should be considered that the level of the living of the laborers practically improved in the third quarter of the century and that it never became as low as the previous level since then. The second aspect is that the wage of the general laborers was extremely insufficient on the absolute level. The wages of the skilled workers were roughly enough to support their families, while the relatively high wages of the construction laborers around 75 per cent. of the wages of the skilled workers. The wages of the port laborers were 65 per cent in favorable cases and were around 50 per cent in most cases. The wages of the agricultural laborers never exceeded "the level of starvation". As is seen in the above, "the improvement of the wage level" as a long-term trend demonstrates paradoxically how deteriorated the living of the unskilled laborers were throughout the entire nineteenth century.<sup>31)</sup> As late as the end of the century, there never existed in the world of general laborers the condition that the wage of a laborer as a supporter of a family afforded his family life.

**Employment.** As an important index concerning the differences of the condition of the workers among strata, unemployment rates should next be examined. As we already mentioned, however, the only existing data concerning the unemployment rate during this period are "the unemployment rate of the union members" kept in the records of the trade unions. Wood estimated the average unemployment rate based on those data, but now we will present the original data of the unemployment of the union members for the major trade unions (Table 5). According to the table, the figures of the various trade unions tended to show nearly the similar fluctuations but there is a considerable differences concerning the level of unemployment in itself.

- 30) The fluctuations of the agricultural laborers and the price of wheat are shown in index in the following table.

	1871	1874	1880	1885	1891	1895
agricultural wage	100	114	104	98	103	97
wheat price	100	98	78	58	65	42

A. Wilson Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 334, prepared from the diagram.

- 31) Emphasizing the improvement of the living of the laborers, Giffen said, "... meat (except bacon) fifty years ago was not an article of the workman's diet as it has since become." Giffen, *op. cit.*, p. 603. This statement fortuitously gave countenance to the deteriorated condition of the living of the laborers until then.

Table 5. Unemployment Rate of Main Trade Unions

	ASE	Associated Blacksmiths	London Compositors	Carpenters and Joiners	Steam Engine Makers	Glass Bottle Makers, Yorkshire	Amalgama- ted Tailors	Boiler Makers and Iron Ship Builders	Iron, Steel and Tin Workers
1860	1.2	4.9	0.97	—	—	—	—	—	—
61	3.2	0.87	1.37	—	—	—	—	—	—
62	6.5	1.5	1.4	—	—	—	—	—	—
63	5.4	0.6	1.4	1.6	—	—	—	—	—
64	2.3	0.3	2.15	0.24	—	—	—	—	—
65	1.8	0.7	2.82	0.25	0.8	—	—	—	—
66	2.4	6.5	2.75	0.26	1.1	—	—	—	—
67	6.6	3.2	3.12	2.6	3.2	6.06	—	—	—
68	8.3	2.7	3.3	2.6	5.7	3.6	—	—	—
69	7.8	1.2	3.82	4.0	5.4	1.5	0.62	—	—
70	4.2	1.2	4.72	4.5	2.2	3.15	0.35	—	—
71	1.3	0.56	2.82	3.5	0.58	1.93	0.35	—	—
72	0.9	0.92	2.07	1.3	0.53	0.73	0.45	—	—
73	1.1	0.35	1.7	1.0	0.65	0.49	0.45	1.1	—
74	1.6	0.94	1.85	0.87	0.81	0.85	0.43	2.4	—
75	2.4	1.4	1.42	0.82	1.2	1.16	0.55	5.8	—
76	3.6	2.0	2.12	0.81	2.0	2.63	0.55	8.6	1.3
77	4.7	2.0	2.65	1.1	2.7	6.1	0.48	7.7	1.6
78	6.8	4.4	2.77	2.5	4.7	7.3	0.46	9.2	1.3
79	13.3	11.1	3.57	7.6	10.1	13.4	0.46	20.4	1.7
80	5.9	2.7	3.27	6.3	3.5	11.4	0.43	7.3	0.5
81	3.5	1.2	3.15	4.9	2.1	5.16	0.45	1.7	0.6
82	1.8	0.67	2.85	3.0	1.1	7.3	0.37	0.65	0.3
83	2.3	1.0	2.72	3.2	1.4	4.23	0.35	1.2	0.3
84	5.1	9.2	2.65	4.0	2.6	6.26	0.39	20.0	2.7
85	6.2	15.9	3.02	6.1	4.4	5.3	0.37	22.3	4.4
86	7.4	14.4	2.8	7.8	5.8	7.5	0.30	22.2	2.9
87	6.3	12.7	2.62	5.8	5.8	6.2	0.36	16.2	11.5
88	4.2	5.0	2.82	5.5	2.6	5.14	0.39	7.8	—
89	1.9	2.7	2.5	3.9	0.93	4.37	0.27	2.2	3.1
90	1.6	2.5	2.2	1.9	0.67	2.9	0.23	3.6	—
91	3.1	1.88	1.88	2.35	1.14	—	0.02	5.3	—

Source, *Fourth and Fifth Reports on Trade Unions*, 1891. G.H. Wood, *op. cit.*, pp.640-642.

However, one of the problems about the condition of British workers in the nineteenth century concerned whether these figures of the unemployment rate could in themselves be relied on as the figures which express the condition of the entire population of the working class. In other words, these figures of the unemployment rate are strictly

those of "trade union members" or "the upper stratum of the workers" and we are beset with the question that the unemployment rate of the general laborers not yet organized may have been much higher. Such a question should naturally be presented as was pointed out by Engels. To our disappointment, however, substantial data are not available to clarify this point. It is not too much to say that there aren't any data at all especially on the third quarter of the century. Therefore, we will first try to understand the situation of the 1880's for which some materials are available. Then we will attempt some examination on the period before the Great Depression.

E. Simcox quoted the findings of the research about "the school children whose fathers are being unemployed" in the supplementary note in the report presented to the Industrial Remuneration Conference, the research being undertaken in the summer of 1885 with the cooperation of many Board School teachers.<sup>32)</sup> As you may see in the Fig. 1 prepared by Wood and discussed earlier, the peak of the unemployment in the 1880's generally lies in 1885 and 1886. According to the research for the school children which was undertaken in the summer of the very year of 1885, 1299 children among 6438 who responded to the questionnaire, i.e., 20 percent, had their father unemployed. As to this figure, Simcox pointed out that ①the object of this research involved the infant school children who were too young to respond correctly to the question, and that ②the question did not concern widowed mothers who supported the families, and so the unemployment rate per "household of a worker" was underestimated, and that ③this research was undertaken in summer when the unemployment rate was empirically at its lowest. If we take these facts into consideration, we must assume that this figure of the unemployment rate is a reserved one. According to the report of the by laws officers of the School Board which Simcox quoted, a quarter of the children attending Lambeth School had their fathers unemployed and eighteen per cent. of those fathers had no regular work at any time. Also according to the Sanitary Record in January 1885, 30 per cent of the children had their father constantly unemployed or only temporarily employed in Islington School. With these data, Simcox concluded as follows: "25 per cent therefore, is a moderate estimate for the average proportion of the very poor out of unemployment, and, considering the numbers of this class, 15 per cent is obviously a very moderate estimate for the average number of unemployed throughout the country".<sup>33)</sup>

On the other hand, the findings of the research of the government office unemployment statistics in March 1887, quoted by Tugan-Baranowsky, showed the unemployment rate of 27 per cent for adult male workers.<sup>34)</sup> In this research, all the residents of 125,313 people living in certain selected districts in London were interviewed, and 27 per cent of 29,451 male workers were found to be unemployed. Above all, the unemployment rates were extremely high in several industrial categories. 55 per cent of the dock laborers were

32) E. Simcox, "Loss or Gain of the Working Class during the 19th Century", *Industrial Remuneration Conference, Report*, pp. 84-107.

33) *Ibid.*, p. 102.

34) Tabulation of the Statements made by "Men living in certain Selected Districts of London, in March 1887", cited in M. Tugan-Baranowsky, *Studien zur Theorie und Geschichte der Handelskrisen in England*, 1901, p. 394.

completely unemployed. 44 per cent of ship building laborers, 37 per cent of furniture makers and plasterers and 33 per cent of house painters were unemployed, while the figures were 20 per cent for the mechanics, 26 per cent for the forgers, and 27 per cent for the tobacco factory laborers. The shoemakers, the book binders, and watchmakers had relatively low unemployment rates respectively of 17 per cent, 12 per cent and 13 per cent. Hence, among all the workers studied in the research, those who experienced unemployment regardless of the length of the periods from October 1886 to March 1887 accounted for not less than 53 per cent. What should be noted is that, when compared with the unemployment rates under each trade union mentioned before, all the figures in this research involving unorganized and less skilled workers are twice to three times as high as the rates of the union members: 20 per cent for the mechanics against 7.4 per cent for the ASE members, 26 per cent for the forgers against 14.4 per cent for those of union members, and 44 per cent for the shipbuilding workers against 22.2 per cent for those of union members.<sup>35)</sup> As to the overall unemployment rate, the figure estimated by Wood was 10 per cent while the figure in this research for the same period was 27 per cent. The high unemployment rates of unskilled or general laborers must be reflected here.

With the understanding of the above relations, it will be possible to attempt a certain induction for the condition before the Great Depression; a clue here is a wonderful correlation between the fluctuation curves of the unemployment rate shown in the graph by Wood and of the number of the "Total Indoor Pauperism" (relieved in work houses). In other words, along with the circulatory increase or decrease of unemployment throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, increase or decrease of the relieved people is developed with a slight time lag in Fig. 1 already discussed. The figure further shows very distinctly an extremely high correlation between the unemployment rate and the level of the number of the relieved people.

We will observe the correlation between these two more in detail. In the 1860's and the first half of the 1870's, there were more relieved people with the relatively low unemployment rate (the union member unemployment rate of 7.5 per cent in 1862, 67 relieved out of 10,000; the unemployment rate of 8.3 per cent in 1868 to 1869, 69.5 relieved out of 10,000) than the second half of the 1870's (the unemployment rate of 9 per cent, 68 relieved out of 10,000). Although both the money wage and the commodity consumption tended to be increasing rapidly until the 1870's, they still stayed in a low level as an absolute level. When compared with the second half of the 1870's, therefore, the decrease in money wages was immediately resulted in the privation of living even under the circumstances of the low unemployment rate in the case of the lower stratum general laborers so that relieving and aiding the poor became a necessity.

At any rate, though Wood pointed out that the unemployment rate of 5 per cent for

35) Employment had not recovered yet in March when this research was undertaken, and so we compared the figures here with those of the union members in 1886 when the unemployment rates were relatively high. As we can see in Table 5, unemployment of union members decreased considerably in 1887, when we compare the figures with those in this research, the differences will become still bigger.

the total union members "possibly may imply 8 per cent or more of the total wage earners",<sup>36)</sup> this estimation should be considered too much reserved ones. Although we can not determine the exact percentages, we can induce, from the relation between the unemployment rates of the union members in the 1880's and the unemployment rates in this research and from the fluctuation curves over a long period of the unemployment rates and of the ratio of the relieved people, that the general unskilled laborers must have experienced unemployment twice or three times as much in the rate as the trade union members even in the time before the arrival of the Great Depression.

Moreover, the effect of the fluctuation of employment does not lead only to the perfect unemployment. Rather, irregular or imperfect employment which also exists in a favorable economic condition becomes meaningful. At the time of 1868, Baxter thought that, as to the real income of the manual workers, the amount corresponding to more than the income of two months should be deducted as the lost time.<sup>37)</sup> Lloyd Jones, who attended the Industrial Remuneration Conference, quoting the foundry union members as an example, reported that the annual average lost time was as much as 20 per cent from 1855 to the 1880's.<sup>38)</sup> Further, G. Sedgwick of the Leicester shoemakers union testified in the discussion that the annual working days are 44 weeks in the rapidly changing shoemaking industry due to the introduction of machinery.<sup>39)</sup> Although Wood showed much reserved figures for the unemployment rate of the entire waged labor, he also pointed out that more lost time was incurred even under the circumstance of that much unemployment (the union members unemployment rate of 5 per cent, the unemployment of 8 per cent for the entire workers) when they moved to another job after leaving one or when they looked for employment opportunities.<sup>40)</sup> As the aforementioned two researches also suggested, this situation acted especially severely on unskilled laborers who suffered from the high degree of imperfect employment.

## V Conclusion

In the above, we attempted to understand the condition of workers in the latter half of the nineteenth century as much in detail as possible, mainly in the aspect of wages and employment. Judging from all the findings here, the condition of the workers, above all the general or unskilled laborers, in the latter half of the century was by far severer than the trend of the money wage rate indicated, and the very severe restriction was imposed on the improvement of the condition. It is on the extended line of the situation studied in this paper that we can evaluate correctly the findings by Charles Booth and by Rowntree.

What confirmed ultimately the real condition of the English working class was the

36) G. H. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 661.

37) P. Deane, "Contemporary Estimates of National Income in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century", *Economic History Review*, Vol. IX, No. 3 (April 1957), p. 455. Cf. J. Saville, *ibid.*, p. 36.

38) Lloyd Jones, Profits of Industry and the Workers, *Industrial Remuneration Conference, Report*, p. 30.

39) *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209.



London Social Survey by Booth, who demonstrated with data collected during 1887-92 that 30.7 per cent of the entire population or 40 per cent of the working class lived below the poverty line in the largest and the most affluent city of London<sup>41)</sup> and the first York Survey by Rowntree (1899), who showed that 27.8 per cent of the entire population or 43 per cent of the waged labor were the poor people in "the representing local town of York".<sup>42)</sup> It should be emphasized here that the existence of a large number of poor people demonstrated by Booth and Rowntree was the result of the "improvement" of the condition of workers which proceeded throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century rather than a temporary "worsening" of the condition of workers due to the Great Depression.

In the next paper, we will discuss what mechanism brought about this "improvement" and how it influenced upon the real course of the industrial relations.

---

40) G. H. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 661.

41) Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 1903.

42) B. S. Rowntree, *Poverty, A Study of Town Life*, 1901.